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Electronic records are creating new challenges for state records units. These units are tasked with assisting state agencies with their public records. Electronic public records require new approaches to both day-to-day management and long-term preservation. As records units try to address these issues, they often face bureaucratic barriers.

This research paper adapts public administration literature focused on three organizational frameworks including structural, political, and human resources to offer recommendations on how records units can create electronic records management solutions that records creators will adopt. Twelve records management practitioners from 11 different states were interviewed for this study. Their responses were used to develop recommendations on how to implement electronic record-keeping initiatives keeping in mind some of the challenges created by the institutional structures and cultures of state government.

Headings:

Records--Management

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ELECTRONIC RECORDS
MANAGEMENT COLLABORATIONS FOR STATE GOVERNMENT RECORDS
UNITS

by

Ashley M. Brown

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Approved by:_____

Dr. Christopher A. Lee

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1 Introduction

State records units provide a valuable service to state government by assisting public administrators and elected officials with managing their records and ensuring that those records are available for public inspection. As more records transition from paper to electronic, records managers are facing new challenges that will need to be addressed. Some of the technical challenges include technological dependence and obsolescence, mutability of data, decentralization of information, and risks to privacy and security (Millar, 2010). However, one of the biggest hurdles facing records managers is getting buy-in from the records creators, who may not always understand that the information they create electronically constitutes a public record. “Electronic records are not always managed effectively, rendering them less valuable as archives, if they even survive long enough to make their way into an archival institution” (Millar, 2010). There are several lenses through which to view the issues facing electronic records management (RM) in a government setting.

The research in this paper adapts public administration literature focused on three organizational frameworks including structural, political, and human resources to offer recommendations on how records units can create electronic records management solutions that records creators will adopt. Rather than looking at the technical infrastructure needed to address electronic records, this paper discusses strategies records managers can employ to better engage stakeholders including state agencies and

information technology units. For this exploratory study, practitioners at state records units were interviewed about the types of organizational barriers and advantages they perceive. The data from these interviews was analyzed to parse out what helps or hinders collaboration on electronic record-keeping initiatives between RM units and these stakeholders.

2 Literature Review

The literature to support this research study has three main focus areas: (1) understanding the historical context of how records management units formed in the US government setting; (2) reviewing the broad need for increased collaboration between RM units and their stakeholders, especially IT; and (3) delving into how literature on organizational theory can inform the relationship between RM units and their stakeholders.

2.1 History and role of State Records Management Units

Prior to analyzing the current structure of record management units, it is important to understand the historical context of how these units developed in government entities. Many RM units have their roots in an archival agency. State archives began to be established in the early twentieth century after an American Historical Association (AHA) report found that many states were neglecting their government records (Council of State Archivists, 2007). By 1910, 23 of 46 states had created a State Archives, and in 1934 the federal government established the National Archives (Council of State Archivists, 2007).

World War II led to increased government records production both at the federal and state level, which drove more states to establish their archives, and some states began to create formal records management units. On the federal level, the National Archives supported records administration since its inception; however, World War II brought more attention by lawmakers to records management functions. During wartime, the US Navy department instituted a formal records program in order to help with office efficiency. By 1949, the Hoover Commission set similar records management programs for all federal agencies as a priority. In 1950, Congress passed the Federal Records Act, which required federal agencies to have active records management programs (Jones, 1969). The Administrator of the General Services was responsible for setting records management standards for agencies, who delegated the authority to the Office of Records Management at the National Archives. The Federal Records Act showed that the government did not believe in a “logical breaking point between the management of records anywhere along the spectrum of creation, maintenance, and, eventually, disposition or preservation” (Jones, 1969). Archivists were seen as the experts in records management and later recommendations by the Hoover Commission only strengthened the National Archives’ records management function (Jones, 1969).

Records management for state government has evolved in different ways, but in many cases, the state archives was given the authority to set policies. Again, war time led many agencies to see the “need for the effective and economical management of current and semi-current records” leading to the “concept of the archives-records management agency [being] responsible for the entire life span of records developed,” which includes disposition of non-permanent records (Jones, 1969). Although states vary on the structure

of their records management units, this historical context shows that lawmakers have seen value in the expertise of archivists and records managers. As more records become digital, and IT departments provide their own expertise in this arena, it will be important for RM units to evaluate how to position themselves – both through organizational structure and cross-jurisdictional collaborations—to ensure that the essential policies of records management are still being applied to new media.

2.2 Need for RM and IT Collaboration

As noted in the section above, records managers and archivists are often seen as having specialized expertise in records management. With digital materials, records managers require the skills and support of IT departments in order to address new challenges in the life cycle of a digital record. However, research shows that RM and IT units do not always work well together. State archivists, librarians, and records managers who attended a 2005 workshop sponsored by the Library of Congress, saw a need for a “closer relationship between librarians/archivists and state CIOs, [including] educating people on archivists and librarians work and getting different professionals to talk together”(Kwon, Pardo, & Burke, 2009). However, participants noted the “different perspective of IT people” as a barrier to partnerships for digital preservation (Kwon, Pardo, & Burke, 2009). The report specifically notes that “IT staff were generally less concerned with information itself and were more interested in methods for information management and control” (Kwon, Pardo, & Burke, 2009). In an additional report by the Center for Technology in Government on the LC workshops, researchers observed the importance of IT units to providing digital preservation services to state agencies. “The

IT unit, in particular, stands out across all three branches of government as holding a significant role in the standards setting process and in providing services related to digital preservation” (Kwon, Pardo, & Burke, 2006).

Similarly, this disconnect is also seen by IT professionals. According to National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) report, “digital preservation and enterprise architecture initiatives are not well connected” in state government (NASCIO, 2007). Some of this disconnect was attributed to the organizational structure and culture of state agencies, which can make cross-boundary collaboration difficult (NASCIO, 2007). More recently, a 2013 NASCIO report found that 75% of state Chief Information Officers (CIOs) surveyed included cross-jurisdictional collaboration as part of their agenda, but many saw issues with governance and turf as a barrier to this collaboration (NASCIO, 2013).

2.3 The State Electronic Records Initiative (SERI)

To address the growing need to both manage and preserve electronic records in state government, the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) started the State Electronic Records Initiative (SERI). This project aims to provide resources and educational opportunities for state records programs along the spectrum of their program’s progress of addressing electronic records. The first phase of the initiative was to assess the landscape and determine the current stage of development for each state’s electronic records management program. SERI received written surveys from all 50 states and 4 territories and then followed up with phone interviews with 48 states and 3 territories (Council of State Archivists, 2012a). Although focused primarily on how far states have

come in addressing their electronic records, the survey did touch upon some of the barriers to progress including records management's relationship with IT. In his report, consultant Phil Bantin found that "many state archives have not made that first important step of 'getting to the table' by participating in standing committees consisting of IT staff and other information managers involved in the management of digital information and records" (Council of State Archivists, 2012a). Bantin notes that a change in the dynamic between RM and IT is necessary before electronic records can be more effectively managed.

In a follow-up report with an analysis of the SERI surveys and interviews, Charles Dollar and Lori Ashley list some of the stakeholders integral to long-term electronic records preservation. These stakeholders include government employees who are the records creators, archivists and records managers, legal professionals, internal and external users of state government, IT professionals, subject matter experts, and citizens (Council of State Archivists, 2012a). Dollar and Ashley underscore the importance of creating clearly defined roles and responsibilities among the stakeholders as well as providing the appropriate training and on-going educational opportunities for each role (Council of State Archivists, 2012a).

SERI showcases the need for state governments to take a proactive approach to managing and preserving electronic records. All stakeholders can play an important part in creating momentum, but it will be the responsibility of records managers to champion this initiative and inspire others to do the same. Although there are potentially many barriers for records managers when collaborating with stakeholders on these issues, the

environment and structure of state government can play a critical role in these collaborations.

2.4 Intergovernmental Collaboration

There is a significant amount of literature that focuses on inter-governmental collaboration, offering recommendations for public sector managers to create successful collaborative environments. However, little of this literature is specific to records management units in state government. This paper aims to take the broader literature and apply it to the records management units. RM units have many stakeholders, as noted by the SERI report. A key set of stakeholders is state agencies and their employees who create records. RM units assist agencies with their active records management programs for a multitude of reasons including legal compliance. Additionally, as noted earlier, IT units are becoming increasingly important partners in records management. In order to address the growing number of digital records, which have unique challenges when it comes to both day-to-day management and long-term preservation, records managers require the expertise of IT departments.

To better understand RM's role in state government, and how it navigates its relationship with stakeholders, this paper adopts the four-frame model of organizations that is presented in Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal's *Reframing Organizations*. Each frame provides a focused lens through which organizations can be viewed. These frames include (1) structural, (2) human resources, (3) political, and (4) symbolic. Records management units can be analyzed through any of the four frames, but the hypothesis of this paper more closely aligns with the challenges addressed by the structural, political

frames, and human resources. The structural frame “focuses on the architecture of organization including roles, goals, and policies (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The political frame views organizations “as competitive arenas of scarce resources, competing interests, and struggles for power and advantage” (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Viewing state agencies through the lens of human resources can provide guidance on how individuals assigned to the right roles can move electronic records initiatives forward.

2.5 Structural Frame

The structural frame analyzes how an organization’s physical structure can impact its efficiency in providing services. This paper examines how records management units fit into the large and complex structure of state government. Also, it investigates the implications of current structures, especially RM units’ relationship to state agencies and IT units when collaborating on electronic records initiatives. The structural frame operates under several assumptions, including “organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division labor” (Bolman & Deal, 2008). As noted above, archivists and records managers have a century-long history of providing expertise in government records management. However, the digital age produces a new era of experts in information technology that are often segmented from records managers in the organizational structure of state government.

Each state government’s executive branch is structured differently. These departments can work autonomously from one another creating silos within government. However, with decreasing resources and a greater sense of responsibility to citizens, governmental departments may benefit from sharing their skills and resources across

jurisdictions in order to be more effective. Specifically, departments can share their social capital in order to create informal networks to address problems that are not unique to just one department. “A person who has high social capital is someone who has a rich set of social connections that provide access to information, resources, support, and so on” (Provan & Lemaire, 2012). Organizations form networks with others in order to increase their social capital and better leverage their resources. In the case of records managers, the network they form with IT units could create better visibility for their services to all other units of government. Oft-cited reasons for networks includes scarce resources, rapid changes in technology, and organizational interdependence (Thomson, Perry, & Miller, 2009).

The key to network success is collaboration. Interorganizational collaboration occurs when “organizations interact with one another to create new organizational and social structures” (Thomson, Perry, & Miller, 2009). However, successful collaborations and the formation of networks requires more than just individuals being willing to participate. Collaborators have to face governance issues including learning how “to jointly make decisions about rules that will govern their behavior and relationship” (Thomson, Perry, & Miller, 2009). As noted earlier, CIOs see “turf” issues as a barrier to collaboration which indicates administrators’ fear of giving up too much control when partnering with other agencies. When two organizations come together, including two agencies under that same state government, each may have its own culture, organizational authority, and accountability measures. Therefore, it is integral that the right people participate in the collaboration.

Successful collaborations will need to be led by administrators who have enough authority to commit their own departments' resources and can encourage participation from other key stakeholders. For example, when discussing e-government inoperability, strong leadership and agency champions are often cited as important factors for successful implementation of enterprise architecture in government (Pardo, Nam, & Burke, 2012). Champions communicate a persuasive vision for an initiative and help build support for it by leveraging their influence and resources (DoFD, 2009). Similar to the networks built out of installing enterprise architecture, records managers need to create a network under the shared purpose of maintaining responsible records practices and preserving long-term electronic records with enduring value.

2.6 Political Frame

The political frame describes organizations as “coalitions composed of individuals and groups with enduring difference who live in a world of scarce resources” (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The 2007 recession led to the largest collapse in state revenue on record (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2012). State governments are still reeling from the recession. Therefore, department heads are competing for relatively scarce resources. Records management units can be placed in many different state agencies. However, a significant portion are placed in either a general administration department or in a department focused on a state's cultural resources, which may not provide records managers as much political clout as a department focused on infrastructure or social services. However, Bolman and Deal note that one can form political influence through networking and building coalitions. “Informal networks perform a number of functions

that formal structure may do poorly or not at all – moving projects forward, imparting culture, mentoring, and creating ‘communities of practice’” (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Records managers often have to rely on the informal relationships they build with leaders in other departments in order to advance their own agenda.

The political frame also speaks to the importance of the distribution of influence in organizations. Specifically, for electronic records management, stakeholders have varying degrees of power and interest in participating in initiatives. In their assessment of collaborations, Mitchell, Agle, & Wood (1997) list “power” or authority as an integral stakeholder attribute. At least one participant in the collaborations needs to have the organizational power to move initiatives through the system. The authors note, “a party to a relationship has power, to the extent it has or can gain access to coercive, utilitarian, or normative means, to impose its will in the relationship” (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Utilitarian and normative power are the most common types of power in government where an agency either has the financial resources or the good will that allows it greater authority. For records managers to be successful in their efforts, they must strategically approach and work alongside specific stakeholders. Russ Linden’s tool for identifying stakeholders, adapted from David Chrislip, asks two important questions: “Who has influence on the particular issue, and who has a stake in it?” (Newell, Reeher, & Ronayne, 2012). In a political arena, especially state government, not every party who has a stake in an issue will have a lot of influence; and vice versa, not every party who has influence will prioritize that issue. As the Library of Congress workshops and the SERI report found, not every stakeholder views records management as a high-priority

issue. Therefore, records managers must find the champions with enough political clout who will assist in creating progress in their shared goals.

2.7 Human Resources Frame

According to Bolman and Deal (2008), the human resources frame “centers on what organizations and people do to and for one another.” This frame helps organizations ensure that the right people are in the right roles. However, once the right employees are hired for a position, it is the organization’s responsibility to make sure that employees have the tools needed to be successful. Some of the keys to success include information-sharing, investing in training opportunities, and promoting egalitarianism (Bolman & Deal, 2008). As the records management field becomes more highly technical, regular training opportunities are integral. According to the SERI report, “identifying skills and training needed for electronic records management and preservation and provide on-going educational opportunities for the stakeholders that create/receive, store, use and manage electronic records” is integral to long-term success of any electronic records management program (The Council of State Archivists, 2012a).

Additionally, the changing nature of records management will require the role of the archivist and the records manager to evolve to address new responsibilities. According to Bolman and Deal (2008), “involvement and training will not ensure success unless existing roles and relationships are realigned to fit the new initiative.” Archivists and records managers will be required to have more technological ability in order to be effective managers of electronic materials. In turn, as SERI notes, technology units need to be “hiring and supporting experienced technical and professional digital preservation

experts in all of the information domains” (The Council of State Archivists, 2012a).

Overall, the human resources frame provides guidance on how to best hire and train the right people in electronic records management.

Although the focus of this paper more closely aligns with Bolman and Deal’s structural, political, and human resources frames, it is worth touching on the symbolic frame. Framing records management through symbolism may help garner champions who will align specific RM goals with greater government values.

2.8 Symbolic Frame

The symbolic frame examines the symbols that give an organization meaning and help shape its culture. For an organization, these symbols may come in the form of rituals, specialized language, ceremony, or humor in order to create common ground necessary for successful team-building (Bolman & Deal, 2008). For government, the uniting purpose is its mission to serve its citizens. As President Lincoln famously said, the United States is a “government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

Although noble in its meaning, an open and representative government means there are many laws that public sector employees at all levels must diligently follow, creating a large bureaucracy. This bureaucracy often becomes siloed as each department tries to remain in control of the parts it is tasked with managing. This problem can be exacerbated by complicated laws that can be difficult to interpret.

Increasingly, the open government movement has become a symbol of a free and successful nation. The current presidential administration has made open government a priority at the federal level, creating increased expectancy of transparency in business

actions at the state and local level. When President Obama entered office, he immediately issued a memorandum stating his commitment to transparency and open government. In a memo directed to heads of executive departments and agencies, President Obama touted the importance of transparency, participation, and collaboration in government (Publication of Open Government Directive, 2010). These three values would be at the forefront of the Open Government Directive that was written by the Federal Chief Technology Officer and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (Publication of Open Government Directive, 2010). The intent of this directive is to make more government information available online and to improve the quality of how that information is presented. Additionally, the President is trying to get agencies to be more proactive by digitally publishing records and data sets to the Web before receiving Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests asking for them (Orszag, 2009). However, achieving efficiency in records management is easier said than done. An analysis of FOIA requests found that President Obama's administration granted a smaller percentage of open records requests in his first two years in office than President Bush's administration in its final three years (Moos, 2012). Records managers have an opportunity to position themselves as drivers to the openness movement, providing cross-departmental services that assist all areas of government not only be legally compliant with government records laws, but also meet the government's larger organizational mission. By aligning themselves with these virtuous symbols of American values, records managers could build their normative power.

3 Research Question

This research investigates the following research question: What helps or hinders collaboration on electronic record-keeping initiatives between records management and its primary stakeholders, state agencies and information technology (IT) units, in state government? Types of collaboration can include: co-creation of policies, workflows, and cross-jurisdictional need for expertise (i.e. server management).

4 Hypothesis

The following three factors will have the greatest impact on influencing the working relationship between RM units and its stakeholders:

1. Location and organizational structure of state records units within the state government;
2. Political and governance issues; and,
3. Clarity of roles and responsibilities.

4.1 Location and organizational structure of state records units within the state government

The overarching department that houses record management will play a critical role in the amount of influence a records unit has within its state government. For example, many records management units are housed with libraries or other cultural institutions creating a likely focus on the historical and cultural importance of government records. While units housed under more administration-based departments, such as Secretary of

State or General Services, are likely to place greater emphasis on a records unit's business function.

As electronic records management becomes a greater part of RM units' focus, they will need to work more closely with IT units. Where RM and IT units fall on the state government's organizational chart will influence their working relationship. If RM and IT professionals report to different department heads then their values, priorities, and goals may differ significantly, making collaboration more difficult.

The analysis of this issue will be guided by Bolman and Deal's "Structural Frame," as discussed in the literature review.

4.2 Politics and Governance Issues

Many state agencies have to compete for resources, creating tensions and potential turf wars. The literature indicates that records units have had to downsize their staff size during the recession, creating additional stress on current employees. As agencies face budgetary cuts, records management is likely to become a low priority for stakeholders. Records managers are unlikely to have the authority or power (both utilitarian and normative) to force agencies to be more proactive in their electronic records management. Additionally, IT units will likely be seen as the experts in systems management, with little thought being given to the record-keeping functions of those systems. IT will have greater influence in many of the functions of electronic records management, and therefore, records manager will need to align themselves more closely with those who do have authority in IT, such as the Chief Information Officer (CIO).

The analysis of this issue will be guided by Bolman and Deal's "Political Frame," as discussed in the literature review.

4.3 Lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities

It is likely that there is not a good understanding of what services records managers provide to state agency employees, especially those services related to electronic records management. Therefore, IT units could be the first stop for records creators rather than RM professionals. This could potentially diminish the role of records managers.

Additionally, agencies are often responsible for assigning one of their employees to serve as the liaison between the agency and the records unit. This person will play an integral role in assisting RM units become strategic partners in their agency's electronic records management. Level of hierarchy and knowledge of basic records management principles will factor into how useful the liaison will be to moving initiatives forward.

The analysis of this issue will be guided by Bolman and Deal's "Human Resources Frame," as discussed in the literature review.

5 Methodology

This is an exploratory study to reveal challenges and opportunities to instituting electronic records management policies and practices through intergovernmental collaborations. It uses literature based on organizational theory to holistically address the problems records units face as a function of state government when implementing their electronic records initiatives. As noted earlier, records serve as legal and historical evidence of state business and therefore, records management units provide a necessary

service to governments. The position of records units -- structurally and authoritatively -- varies across states. However, the intent of this research is to tease out some of the best methods for improved practices based on the recommendations and feedback from records management professionals. Twenty practitioners from different states were approached to participate. These twenty states were chosen based on two factors: (1) if the state's website indicated that it actively addresses electronic records through a records management unit; and (2) the location of the records unit within the state government organizational structure. The state records units' departmental placement was determined through website searches and assistance from the organizational chart created by CoSA in December 2012 (Council of State Archivists, 2012b). The second criterion was used to create enough diversity among the records units to test whether there are some structural influences. Appendix A includes the placement of interviewee's records management programs within their respective states.

In total, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with practitioners from 11 different states. Two practitioners from one state were interviewed after the initial interviewee referred a colleague to help clarify some points. The interviews were conducted by phone with the exception of one interview that was conducted through email. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Practitioners ranged in titles and authority from state archivists to electronic records archivist or records analyst. However, every interviewee played an active role in his or her state's records management program. Each practitioner was asked the same core set of questions, but follow-up questions were based on each respective practitioner's response to the set questions. Appendix B includes a list of the set questions.

6 Data Analysis

The interview notes were coded using three of the Bolman and Deal's organizational frameworks: structural, political, and human resources. These three frameworks were used since they address the hypothesis. After the content was organized based on one or more of the frameworks, emergent codes were developed in order to see trends among the data. Those trends were then divided into either a perceived barrier or a perceived advantage to current records management. Also, all practitioners were asked about their respective unit's top priorities. These priorities were parsed out of the interview content and divided into similar categories. Appendices C through E include tables of the coded data.

7 Findings

The findings focus on the RM unit priorities and perceived barriers and advantages based on the organizational frameworks discussed in the literature review and hypothesis: (1) Structural Frame; (2) Political Frame; and (3) Human Resources Frame.

7.1 Unit Priorities

There were several emergent electronic records management priorities for records units according to the practitioners. The most prevalent priority is outreach and education for agency employees to teach them about how to manage their electronic records. Ten out of 11 units stated that agency training and outreach is a current priority. Six practitioners noted that program development is a current priority. Program

development includes policy and procedure creation for electronic records management. Finally, email was continually mentioned as one of the largest challenges, and five practitioners explicitly listed email management and retention as a unit priority to address. Although only two practitioners named “creating a business case for electronic records management” as one of his or her unit’s top three priorities, all of the practitioners noted that their unit continues to compete for financial resources with other units of government.

7.2 Structural Frame Analysis

Five out of 11 of the records management units represented in this study fall under the jurisdiction of a department geared toward archives, libraries, and/or cultural resources; four are under general services or secretary of state; one is under the information technology department; and one falls under a specific public records commission. In two of the states, RM and IT units are located in the same department – one of the states in an information technology department and one under the jurisdiction of Secretary of State. Based on the interviews, the most significant issue under the structural framework is that agencies largely act autonomously from one another on policies and procedures related to electronic records management. Other structural themes include the location of RM unit on the state government organizational chart and the RM units’ relationship with the IT unit. However, some of the perceived structural advantages include both formal committees that address records management and informal networks.

7.2.1 Agency Autonomy

Nine representatives reported that agency autonomy was an issue when trying to institute electronic records management initiatives. Each agency responds differently to the RM unit; therefore, instituting policies and procedures for initiatives that address electronic records can vary wildly among the agencies. As one practitioner said, “some agencies really get it, and some do not. They have so many other responsibilities.” RM units expend a lot of energy and resources trying to recruit individual agencies as active partners in electronic records management. One practitioner indicated that her own overarching department, which is in general services, “does not have a sense of how important the records management program is.” As another interviewee stated, “agencies do not take seriously information as an asset. They would not treat their financials that way.” Also, some of the interview participants stated that many agencies do not understand the changing nature of records management as becomes digital. “We have people saying to us ‘I don’t need a records retention schedule anymore because it is all electronic. We have done a lot to raise awareness, but it is hard to bring about change.’”

The one state where the RM unit is a function of the IT department expressed greater integration into state technology initiatives. This unit’s representative from this unit stated that she felt there were great advantages to being part of the state’s IT unit. “By being placed with IT, we bring awareness of records management issues to technology-minded people. They are more aware of what we do.” Additionally, she felt that there were more opportunities for RM and IT to address electronic records issues with agencies in a more holistic manner. “We have a shared message to agencies, that it is still their records, but IT just manages their data center.” However, elected officials

often have the ultimate say in many of the big decisions for electronic records management, and a united front between IT and RM does not always equate to more political clout. When this particular state attempted to get an email archiving system, the governor ultimately did not approve it. However, as a sign of a united front, the Enterprise Architecture Coordinator testified at the budget hearing, and the records manager was included in conversations leading up to the presentation.

7.2.2 Location of Records Unit and Authority

Five practitioners indicated that the location of the RM unit on the organizational chart negatively impacted the unit's authority. Four of those units fall under the jurisdiction of a department geared toward archives, libraries, and/or cultural resources. The other is a unit under the Department of General Services. In contrast, three units indicated that the RM unit's placement was an asset. Two of the units fall under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State and the other unit is under the IT department. One of the practitioners, whose unit falls under the secretary of state, noted that it was an asset not to report to the governor. "We have strong laws, independence, and a strong sense of job owning. Therefore, I work with the governor, but if I need to, I can bypass him and go straight to the legislature." This practitioner also cited "formal authority" through state statutes as an advantage to his state's RM unit.

7.2.3 Importance of Strong Working Groups/ Records Committees

Many states have a records commission or board that helps set records retention and institute new policies. Some states even have committees that specifically address electronic records. Eight interviewees said that it was an advantage to have formal

working groups or committees that address records management. Specifically, these groups allow for more stakeholders to take part in the conversation. However, some of the practitioners indicated that the usefulness of these committees was dependent on recruiting the right participants. The more participants with authoritative positions, the more successful these committees can be in advancing specific initiatives. One interviewee noted that “we have the chief examiner on one of our boards, which is great because he has the power of auditing an agency if they are not following through with their responsibilities.”

One state has found some success by requiring that an IT person be part of a working group that helps set an agency’s retention schedule. Other members of the working group include the agency’s records officer, legal counsel, and business officer. Although the records manager and the records officer take the lead, the IT representative is kept abreast of the retention scheduling and the components directly related to her expertise. This working group requires an initial face-to-face meeting where all relevant staff are present so that the records management unit can learn more about the agency’s needs, and then the working group can proceed in creating retention schedules and address electronic records. “We very much see this process as a collaboration, and we involve IT from the very beginning so they are aware of what we are doing.”

7.2.4 Information Technology: Centralized v. Agency-Based

Three practitioners indicated that the placement of the IT unit in the governmental organizational can be a barrier. These three practitioners are from states where the IT unit is more centralized, rather than having individual IT professionals throughout the various agencies. These practitioners did not provide a lot of positive feedback for centralized IT

units. States with centralized IT services often charge for their agencies for IT services. This internal services model ensures that each agency contributes to the IT unit based on its use of IT services such as device management, server space, security, etc. One of the participants, whose state is currently centralizing IT, saw an opportunity in this new model. “Agencies are going to have to start paying for server space, which will make them think more about what they are keeping. Suddenly they will need to look at all pieces of data since you have to pay for it. Cost will now be a factor, and it’s all about resources.” However, the same practitioner indicated concern that there will be less opportunity to work directly with an IT professional within an agency, who can serve as the liaison with the technological knowledge of electronic record-keeping, and also share that knowledge with their unit.

7.2.5 Outside Networks

Six practitioners indicated that their connections with other practitioners through professional organizations are an advantage. Although these networks are not a direct connection between the RM unit and its governing body, they do help provide resources mainly through training opportunities and cross-jurisdictional collaborations. These networks often provide guidance and offer opportunities to collaborate on grant-funded projects. For example, the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP) funded through the Library of Congress has helped states collaborate together on digital preservation projects including the Persistent Digital Archives and Library System (PeDALS) and Multi-State Preservation Partnership (MSPP). In a review of NDIIPP-funded projects, Christopher Lee noted that "the most successful initiatives are those that actively seek connections and collaborations with allied experts and

professionals" (Lee, 2012). Additionally, these partnerships allow practitioners to see the different approaches to a problem in order to gauge the best response in their own state. For less developed records management units, these networks outside of their own governments can provide valuable assistance and support.

7.3 Political Frame Analysis

The initial hypothesis cited “political and governance issues” as a barrier to collaboration. This was a prevalent issue among those interviewed. Eight practitioners indicated that they did not feel they held much political clout or authority. As one interviewee noted, “records management is viewed as a back office function.” Another said “we are buried under bureaucracy and we are the lowest rung.” Overall, these units have very little utilitarian power.

Regardless of where records management falls in the state government organizational chart, one of the biggest challenges for all of the RM units is making a business case for its operations. Since the recession, governments are trying to be more strategic with their funds, and they are passing this pressure down to individual agencies. As noted in the unit priorities, making a business case will be integral to gaining authority. One practitioner said its unit needs “the proper economic model that balances the need for preservation format/size of records, storage, integrity check and access to ever growing eRecords and ever diminishing public funding.” Although two interviewees noted that they added staff in recent years, all practitioners have said that they have little utilitarian power, specifically related to their budgets. Financial concerns were perceived as a barrier among all the interviewees. One participant noted that 60% of the archives

staff had been cut since 2006. “Now we are limping along, doing what we can.” Another interviewee also feels the challenges of finding funding for a specific project to create more cloud computing solutions for his state. “We’re doing a pilot project right now, but selling this as a budget item will be a tough sell.” As noted earlier, even an interviewee whose RM unit falls under the jurisdiction of IT had a request for an email archiving system denied by the governor for budgetary reasons. Making a business case for electronic records management will continue to be critical to successfully funding future initiatives. Unfortunately, as one participant notes, “until you can put dollar amounts to its worth, people won’t get behind it.”

7.4 Human Resources Frame Analysis

The hypothesis stated that a lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities for records management would be a barrier to effective initiatives. Ten of the practitioners indicated that training and outreach is a priority of their unit. This is largely due to continued confusion among state employees on the role of RM units. The practitioners also indicated that some state employees believe that the use of computers means that they no longer need to actively manage records. As one interviewee said, “records management has shifted over the years. When RM was all paper, records were more centralized. Now people are creating records on all types of electronic devices. We need to educate people that their records still need to be managed.” One of the key elements to successfully addressing electronic records is for RM units to have an adequate number of staff to be effective. Additionally, throughout the interviews, the importance of each

agency's individual records officer often played an important part in the agency's ability to manage its records.

7.4.1 Staffing Makes a Difference

As noted earlier, most records units have seen their staff cut significantly in the past five to ten years. However, for those two states that have added staff, it created a significant difference in their ability to be proactive. "When you have staff, you can increase the awareness. And so our agencies are getting better at records management." Five practitioners indicated having more staff is critical, but that when addressing electronic records, these staff members need to have more technical expertise than when they worked with analog records. Practitioners expect that the next generation of records managers will need to have a basic knowledge of programming and database management.

7.4.2 Records Officers

Most records units require that state agencies have a records officer who serves as that agency's liaison with the records unit and is responsible for instituting retention scheduling for the agency. As noted under the structural analysis, the autonomy of the individual agencies can be one of the largest barriers to records management; therefore, it is imperative to have a strong link to the agency through its records officer.

Unfortunately, four practitioners indicated that the job of records officer is given to an individual who has both low authority and a low stake in records management. When discussing working with agencies, one interviewee said, "Records officers are always fairly low on their hierarchy. They are not given any training. Maybe they are given a

copy of the retention schedule.” Therefore, it becomes the records unit’s responsibility to get the records officer active and trained in their agency’s records program.

8 Limitations

This research is limited in scope. Since it only provides the point-of-view of 12 practitioners, it is not possible to generalize to all states. A more comprehensive study could include more interviews and surveys to get a more complete picture of the inter-governmental collaborations to address electronic records management. This study also walked a fine line not to recreate previous studies, especially those conducted by the SERI project. The survey and interviews conducted by the SERI project as discussed in the literature review, provides a lot of information that parallels the themes discussed in this paper. The intent of this research is to view the barriers of electronic records management through the lens of organizational theory. By analyzing state government structures, the findings can be inconsistent since state government structures vary state-to-state. However, although limited in scope, this research paper was able to identify several broad themes that lead to the barriers of electronic records management in state government. Future research from projects like SERI may want to address the topic not only from a records management point-of-view, but also through the lens of public administration since being a government entity plays a significant role in the actions records managers can take. Other researchers interested in this topic may find it advantageous to work more closely with the SERI project since it is an active initiative and it already involves many current practitioners who are interested in this topic.

9 Recommendations

Based on the interviews, the following recommendations have been developed to address electronic records management within the bounds of state government organizational structures.

9.1 Build Relationships with the Right Program Champions

Relationship building is an integral component to growing the capacity for an electronic records management program. As noted in the literature review, program champions can help records managers get the authority they need to be successful in these efforts. The more champions a program can recruit, especially at higher levels of government, the more normative and utilitarian power a records unit can gain. At the agency level, records managers have to sell their services as an asset to an agency. One way to get more buy-in is to find champions who can support the business case for why electronic records management is necessary. Two potential champions include the state's legal counsel and the financial division. Finding a way to quantify the importance of electronic records management, such as highlighting previous litigation in other states or through a cost benefit analysis, can give records managers leverage when seeking additional resources.

9.2 Hire Records Managers with Strong Information Technology Skills

Although most of the technical aspects of electronic records management will be the responsibility of IT units, it is integral that records managers have the ability to

understand the basics of the systems that are being installed. If records managers expect to be viewed as a peer and partner in electronic records management with IT personnel, then they need to show that they have the ability to speak intelligibly and correctly about the technology in place.

9.3 Build Records Management into the System Front End

Specific to electronic records management, several of the study participants noted the importance of building records management into the front end of installing a new system. “If you do not build that retention into the system, people do not want to go back and deal with it later,” said one interviewee. This requires that RM units have a strong relationship with either the individual agencies or IT, to help make this functionality of an information-producing system available from the beginning.

9.4 Focus on Training for all Stakeholders

Education and training are major priorities and job functions for all of the records units interviewed. However, only one practitioner mentioned holding training specifically for their IT counterparts. Rather, most of the training was focused on the records creators. Providing training specifically geared to IT professionals may help bridge the knowledge gap of viewing information as a resource that needs to be professionally managed. One interviewee said, “it really pays to train IT because they don’t see themselves as dealing with records, but rather they see themselves as dealing with technology. But they are custodians of records, and once they have been trained you can say to them, ‘You now know, and you must comply with records law.’”

9.5 Create Job Descriptions for Agency Records Officers

An agency records officer is an important component of an agency's success in electronic records management. One way to help guide an agency when choosing a records officer is to provide a job description of the role that includes specific qualification criteria, such as specifying a certain comfort level with technology. The more the records unit can guide an agency in choosing its records officer, the more likely the officer will either have authority, or at the very least, an interest in being proactive with his or her agency's records management program.

10 Potential for Future Research

Two topics frequently mentioned by interviewees are the challenges of email and work with local municipalities. Five practitioners listed addressing email management and retention as a unit priority. Email is an unwieldy source of electronic records that are difficult to manage. Records creators hold a lot of the responsibility for managing it, but the interviewees showed little confidence in the likelihood that it is being managed in any sustainable way. Many of these units are monitoring the National Archives' capstone email project. The capstone email project is the new approach to managing federal email. Rather than setting retention for each email based on content, agencies select specific email accounts that will be designated for permanent retention. It is a new approach to email retention on the federal level, and states are monitoring its progress to see if it may be a viable option on the state level.

Another area of interest is the records units' work with local government. Two practitioners listed "focus on local government" as one of their unit's priorities. Some of the participants noted that local governments are starting to think about their electronic records management but that it is still in its early stages. For example, investigating how police departments manage the records for cases that go unsolved will be an evolving issue.

11 Conclusion

The intent of this research paper is to assist state records management units in addressing electronic records through collaboration with other stakeholders. This paper used literature rooted in organizational theory to help provide context to some of the issues these units face as functions of large state governments. Through interviews, this study was able to identify some of the challenges of electronic records management and then provide a set of manageable recommendations to help RM units overcome these issues. The study was exploratory and more in-depth research is needed to truly understand how structure affects success in RM programming. However, this research adds to the discussion around governmental electronic records management and it serves as a jumping off point from which other researchers can continue to assist records managers in their pursuit to effectively manage 21st-century records programs.

Appendix A) Structural Frame

State	Placement of Records Management	Placement of Information Technology
A	Information Technology Department	Information Technology Department
B	Department of Libraries and Archives	Office of Technology
C	Secretary of the State	Department of Information and Innovation
D	Departments of Archives and History	Department of Finance
E	State Archives	Department of Administration
F	Secretary of the State	Office of Financial Management
G	Cultural Resources	Office of Information Technology Services
H	General Services	Department of Technology
I	Secretary of State	Secretary of State
J	Commission on Public Records	Office of Technology
K	Historical and Museum Commission	Office of Administration

Appendix B) Set Questions

- (1) Can you give me quick overview of your unit and your role?
- (2) Currently, what are your unit's top three priorities?
- (3) Who are your unit's main stakeholders?
- (4) What is your unit currently doing to address electronic records?
- (5) Who do you most frequently collaborate with on projects or policies related to electronic records?
- (6) What do you see as working well in your unit's current operations of electronic records management?
- (7) What do you see as the greatest challenges to electronic records management?

Appendix D) Perceived Barriers of Current Records Management

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Structural Frame											
Records management placement in state government				X	X			X			X
IT placement : centralized v. agency-based						X		X	X		
Formal working groups/committees											
Lack of informal networks											
Agency autonomy		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Poor and/or limited working relationship with IT				X			X	X			X
Political Frame											
Formal authority (based on state laws, executive directives, etc.)		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Lack of utilitarian power: financial resources	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lack of normative power: good will, relationship-building									X		
Not an agency priority		X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Not an IT Priority		X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Human Resources Frame											
Lack of champions				X		X		X			X
Amount of staff to complete tasks			X	X				X	X		X
Skill set of records management staff					X						
Skill set of IT staff (ie. digital preservation, etc.)		X				X					
Agency records officers authority						X	X	X	X		

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